DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 304 688 CS 211 678

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TITLE Narrative Knowers, Expository Knowledge: Discourse as a Dialectic. Occasional Paper No. 6.
INSTITUTION Center for the Study of Writing, Berkeley, CA.; Center for the Study of Writing, Pittsburgh, PA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jan 89
NOTE 38p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; *Expository Writing; Higher Education; *Narration; Personal Narratives; Teaching Methods; Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes
IDENTIFIERS *Rhetorical Theory; Text Factors; Writing Assignments

ABSTRACT

The best thinking and writing is at once personal and public, both infused with private meaning and focused upon the world beyond the self. The goal of writing teachers is to help students learn to negotiate between the two, to locate those dynamic points of connection where experience gives rise to inquiry. Notwithstanding the often eloquent dissent of those favoring the personal narrative, most composition instructors locate the center of their task in promoting facility with academic writing in all of its various guises, a goal which leads of necessity toward the expository. Such a focus diverts attention away from the narrative form, denying a clear vision of how it continues to mature and how it might also help nurture both the beginnings and development of expository competence. Western culture's bias toward such "decontextualized" prose is powerfully reflected in a provocative essay by David Olson in which he delineates the relation of meaning to language as either "extrinsic," as in an oral "utterance," or "intrinsic," as in a written "text." As the world of ideas is mixed with the students' own lives and the stories they tell, the objective is brought into the world of personal meaning. Egocentricity is overcome, but not at the cost of subjective involvement. What is needed is not only a deeper appreciation of the poles of the continuum, but an understanding of the dialectic they can form together--how it informs the whole of cognition, and how it can inform the teaching of writing. (One hundred thirty references are attached.) (RAE)

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Occasional Paper No. 6

NARRATIVE KNOWERS, EXPOSITORY KNOWLEDGE: DISCOURSE AS A DIALECTIC

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January, 1989

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The project presented, or reported herein, was performed pursuant to a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement/Department of Education (OERI/ED) for the Center for the Study of Writing. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the OERI/ED and no official endorsement by the OERI/ED should be inferred.

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NARRATIVE KNOWERS, EXPOSITORY KNOWLEDGE: DISCOURSE AS A DIALECTIC

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> "Only those voices from without are effective which speak in the language of a voice within."
>
> --Kenneth Burke (1950, p. 39)

Recently I visited a freshman composition class in which the instructor was attempting to explain the first assignment of the semester--the essay, readily familiar to almost anyone who has ever taught or taken a writing course, about a "meaningful event." "I don't want just your stories," he admonished them, but, rather, something that "goes beyond mere narrative" to a treatment of the "larger issues" thereby suggested. Intended as an initiatory warm-up before launching into the course's more purely expository agenda, the assignment allowed some personal digression, but asked that students come around rather soon to an explicitly stated point of public concern. Indeed, the very words--"narrative," "story"--were uttered in a tone of notable disdain, puzzling these students who had just spent the first days of class reading and discussing short literary works from an assigned anthology. Weren't these, they wanted to know, "just narratives" too, after all? Why were such canonical works singled out for their careful examination, but their own stories ruled insufficient if not fused, like sugary veneer, to some ostensibly expository end?

The dilemma is familiar to writing teachers--indeed, to educators--everywhere: how both to engage our students and to broaden their horizons, both to meet them on their own turf and to promote its fertility and scope. Pure narrative, we are warned, may nurture the former aim but will surely impede the latter. Flower (1979), for instance, names the narrative framework as a hallmark of "writer-based" prose: locking the writer into a "blow-by-blow" account of one's own discovery process rather than allowing for a more abstract discussion of "implications or logical connections," the narrative is said to sidestep the need for analytic thinking, "burying ideas within the events that precipitated them" and thereby obscuring "the more important logical and hierarchical relationships" (p. 25). But meanwhile, an opposite view prevails: "No one tells us," complains Rosen (1984), "why language development should not include as a central component getting better at telling and

responding to stories of many different kinds" (p. 6), why one's stories should be put aside like "childhood toys" to make way for what we are told is the "greatest intellectual achievement of Western Civilization"--expository prose (p. 26).

Few would dispute that the best thinking and writing is at once personal and public, both infused with private meaning and focused upon the world beyond the self. The goal of writing teachers is of course to help students learn to negotiate between the two, to locate those dynamic points of connection where experience gives rise to inquiry. Why, then, the tenacity of the schism--"mere anecdote," "just stories," on the one hand, "objective" "reasoned" exposition on the other? Notwithstanding the often eloquent dissent of those favoring the personal narrative (e.g., Britton et al., 1975; Elbow, 1973, 1981; Emig, 1971; Macrorie, 1970), most composition instructors locate the center of their task in promoting facility with academic writing in all its various guises, a goal which leads of necessity toward the expository (see Rose, 1983). And yet, many practitioners remain at heart somewhere in the middle of the continuum, feeling the resonance of objections like Rosen's, but duty-bound to address, as expediently as possible, their students' immediate needs. While allowing that stories afford children a wonderful first encounter with the written word, the assumption is still commonly held (if tacitly, in many cases) that the narrative is something one "grows out of" as cognitive maturity allows abstract, reasoned, depersonalized exposition to emerge. Although empirical evidence for such a claim remains scant, much instruction continues to be aimed toward fostering a sort of "grand leap" away from narrative and into the presumably more grown-up world of exposition.

Such a focus diverts our attention away from the narrative form, denying us a clear vision of how it continues to mature and how it might also help nurture both the beginnings and development of expository competence. Indeed, composition researchers and practitioners alike appear largely untouched by the lively interest in narrative currently flourishing in fields as diverse as history, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, rhetoric, folklore, and literary criticism (see, for instance, *On Narrative*, 1981, a collection of papers presented at an interdisciplinary conference on narrative at the University of Chicago in 1979). As Rosen (1984) points out, the absence of educators at such an event is both striking and distressing. How did composition specialists in particular become so distracted from an area which should so uniquely concern them?

While the narrative form can assume guises ranging from the scientific to the poetic, among composition teachers "narrative" and personal experience essays are generally regarded as the same, largely suspect phenomenon. Where the scientific chronology is ultimately examined in the context of generalizable principles, its hallmark being careful, verifiable detail, the personal or imaginative narrative seeks to explore the slippery vicissitudes of the human condition, and mastery in doing so is somewhat harder to define. At its best, such prose is authentic, engaging, and richly reflective; at its worst, narrow and mundane. Thus, while a few advocate its nurture, others see narrative as a cognitive

prison that denies students the opportunity to move beyond their own limited world views (see Connors, 1987, for an extended look at the evolution of these two positions). So long has the difference been cast as conflict that few have examined how narrative and exposition might be seen as complementary ends of a dynamic continuum, distinct but equally valid modes of both thought and discourse. Long perceived as horns of a dilemma, exposition and narration can be productively re-envisioned as interacting points on a fertile dialectic.

Given educators' tunnel vision on the subject of things narrative, such a conceptual shift requires a somewhat circuitous route which moves beyond the present confines of composition studies. Thus, I begin with a look at the rhetorical tradition which severed narration from exposition and came to embrace the latter, eavesdrop on what various disciplines have had to say of late about the narrative way of knowing, examine empirical research which explores issues relevant to the production and comprehension of narrative discourse, and, finally, return to the challenge of productively healing the present schism.

THE ASCENT OF EXPOSITION

Where but in a classroom will students encounter the soulless, spineless sort of prose they are commonly led to emulate in the name of "exposition"? "Cleansed of ideology," as Rosen (1984, p. 26) puts it, "purged of concreteness and the encumbrance of context," it "soars into the high intellectual realm because, so it is said, it is 'decontextualized' (as if that could be true of any kind of discourse)." And what, one might wonder, is thereby "exposed"? Whence comes the assumption that depersonalized, disembedded writing is somehow more intellectually advanced? Who decided that sophisticated expression deletes the expressor, laundering out that idiosyncrasy of voice and perspective which reveals the individual behind the text?

Our culture's bias toward such "decontextualized" prose is powerfully reflected in a provocative essay by David Olson (1977) in which he delineates the relation of meaning to language as either "extrinsic," as in an oral "utterance," or "intrinsic," as in a written "text." Following the lead of Goody and Watt (1963, p. 331), who had earlier argued that Greek alphabetic literacy made possible "a different kind of relationship between the word and its referent, a relationship that is more general and abstract, and less closely connected with the particularities of person, place and time, than obtains in oral communication," Olson sets out to further argue the supposed "Great Divide" between oral and written modes of thought and discourse. "Both culturally and developmentally," he asserts (p. 258), there is this movement from utterance to text, with language taking on "increasing explicitness," a growing capacity "to stand as an unambiguous representation of meaning."

Like Goody and Watt, Olson sees in the growth of Greek alphabetic literacy the foundations of Western science and philosophy, fields which could

flourish "only by adopting the language of explicit, written, logically connected prose" (p. 269). The rise of empiricist philosophy and deductive empirical science in the seventeenth century was accompanied, notes Olson, by a new conception of the relationship between thought and language, with knowledge being re-envisioned as the "product of an extended logical essay--the output of the repeated application in a single coherent text of the technique of examining an assertion to determine all of its implications" (p. 269). For John Locke and the British essayists following in his footsteps, writing was seen not only as a means of expressing this process of formulating and testing hypotheses, but an essential tool in enacting such meaning-making (see also Brannon & Knoblauch, 1984). The sort of written language embraced as appropriate to the scientific processes of deduction, discovery, and analysis was expedient, informative, and shorn of stylistic embellishment. Powerfully espoused in Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690/1964; see also Corbett, 1981) and in the Royal Society's seventeenth-century manifesto endorsing the "plain style" (see Kinneavy, 1971; Olson, 1977; Tillen, 1912), a "new" rhetoric emerged to serve the needs of the increasingly prestigious scientific community. Thus, argues Olson, the early empiricists fulfilled the promise of the Greek alphabetic system, perfecting "a form of language specialized to serve the requirements of autonomous, written, formalized text" (p. 270), a language which, even today, constitutes the prime goal of writing instruction emphasizing the depersonalized, decontextualized "expository" essay.

While the term "exposition" is now commonly understood as synonymous with "explanation" in all its various applications, when Alexander Bain introduced it to popular pedagogy in his influential *English Composition and Rhetoric* (1866) he too was thinking mainly of the needs of writers in the natural sciences. Consolidating and crystallizing a long-developing trend toward applying contemporary principles of cognition to rhetoric, Bain organized the 1866 version of his text around the now-infamous "modes of discourse"--narration, description, exposition, and argument--and grounded his system in then-respected, now-discounted (and largely forgotten) associationist psychological theory (see Harned, 1985; Woods, 1985). Bain's explanation of how each mode moved a particular "faculty" (in Bain's simplified taxonomy these were intellect, will, imagination, and feelings) and operated within a given "law of association" is aligned with the empiricist's vision of language as a tool through which one organizes sense impressions; indeed, in presenting exposition as an essentially "new" mode of discourse, Bain was attempting to provide a vehicle for organizing, analyzing and articulating sense data in scientific inquiry.[1]

Despite the lingering influence of Bain's modal system, there are many revealing tensions between what he intended and how practitioners and textbook writers would adapt his ideas to suit popular inclination. For instance, while Bain introduced exposition as a vehicle for thinking and writing about science, later texts would adapt it to more widely ranging purposes (see Connors, 1985)--still generally retaining, however, something of the British essayist's interest in a rhetorical approach which is objectified, depersonalized, and plain. Meanwhile,

narration--which Bain had conceived as a vehicle primarily for historiography--became the prime medium for the entry of personal writing into composition curricula (see Connors, 1987). While the personal narrative is still commonly granted a place in composition instruction, it is generally a much lesser one, conceived in most cases as a relatively easy preliminary before settling into the mainly expository business at hand. Ironically, Bain had deplored the tendency even in his day, when narration was still seen as primarily impersonal, to talk of it as "one of the easiest efforts of composition," "the elementary manuals" generally disposing of it "in a few pages" (*On Teaching English*, p. 8). "In this," argued Bain, "there are several oversights of enormous magnitude": namely, that "very few narratives are confined to a single thread of events," but, rather, negotiate among "several trains of actions proceeding simultaneously," and, furthermore, "in a narrative, the events are not only stated, but explained" (p. 8).

Bain's warning notwithstanding, the tendency to underestimate the cognitive demands of narrative prose has grown rather than diminished. As narration came to be aligned with "personal" writing, Bain's modes were grasped increasingly not only as taxonomy but, indeed, as hierarchy. In countless classrooms still feeling the influence of Bain's system, instruction leads from the "personal" modes of description and, especially, narration, towards the presumably more sophisticated, usually depersonalized world of exposition and argument (the latter now commonly subsumed under the expository label). It is ironic that the same Bain who cleared the way for the introduction of personal writing by naming narration as a mode separate from but equal in value to exposition is today widely seen as the founder of freshman composition, a course most commonly bearing the proper name "Expository Writing." Once "expository" came to mean impersonal and "narrative" personal, there was little real contest: exposition was (and is) associated with serious, academic writing, the goal toward which all other instructional paths commonly converge (see Connors, 1985).

The heart of the problem lies less in the relative strengths and deficiencies of Bain's rhetorical theory than in the unfortunate tendency, dating back to the Greeks, toward constructing such artificial, misleading classifications. Rhetorical tradition has too often distorted issues of intention and purpose by setting up unnatural distinctions, devising categories and components which are said to be useful for both describing and teaching the art of written discourse. Even apart from the enthusiasm for modal taxonomies, the work of nineteenth century rhetoricians like Bain tends to be saturated with invented oppositions: "form and method" seen as separate from "ideas and language" (*On Teaching English*, 1887), the "intellectual" and "emotional" elements of style taken up in separate volumes of the 1887 edition of *English Composition and Rhetoric*. While the confusion of means with ends which plagues Bain's modal system has often been discussed (e.g., Applebee, 1984; Britton et al., 1975; D'Angelo, 1984; Kinneavy, 1971), less often critiqued is the central dichotomy which arose from its popular adaptation--that artificial opposition of "personal" versus "impersonal" writing which still divides writing teachers today (Connors, 1987).

Where writers are expected to "follow the rules," adhering to the configurations of a given genre instead of letting their own ideas and inclinations dictate form, they sidestep the realization that modal classifications often have little to say about either a writer's intention or a reader's response. And as Brannon and Knoblauch (1984, p. 33) point out, such an emphasis on the supposed distinction between form and content also divorces writers from "humanity, imagination, flexibility, and intellectual self-reliance," which in the end count for more than the "codes of formal behavior" encapsulated in relics like the modes of discourse. "It also overlooks," they suggest, "the fact that a preoccupation with the codes cannot instill these personal virtues or create the motivation to prepare for the social group or profession in which the codes are meaningful" (pp. 33-34).

The need thus emerges to look at writing as a flexible, many-faceted phenomenon involving divergent and ever-shifting goals, engaging the whole self in all its interwoven dimensions--the cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual. Applebee (1984) notes that while writing is best viewed as a "medium for the many uses of language," too often researchers have confounded the cognitive effects of literacy with those of Western schooling, focusing narrowly upon decontextualized, depersonalized "expository" prose written for the sole purpose of fulfilling a teacher's expectations. An important counter to this tradition, Scribner and Cole's (1981, 1981a) research suggests the limits of school-based cognition, thus undercutting the popular tendency to base models of what reading and writing are all about on the narrowly specialized, essayist tradition promoted by Western education.

While Bain's expository mode has spilled out of its early science-writing mold, its adaptation and eventual transcendence underscores a Western cultural bias which favors objectified, depersonalized knowledge. Splintered by popular inclination and rhetorical tradition away from human feeling and experience, exposition evolved into "the scientific model of thesis and support," the typical essay marching dutifully, linearly toward a central point (Zeiger, 1985, p. 456), too often devoid of any sense of engagement or exploration. Add American practicality to British empiricism, and a view of writing came to be firmly entrenched which defined it almost exclusively as a vehicle for transmitting information--typically, information of significance to business or science--in a plain and efficient manner. "Since Locke," writes Dasenbrock (1987, p. 293), "we have shared a vision of language that saw it as principally a mode of representing the world in propositions and in expository modes," the only acceptable discourse being that which is literal, disinterested, clear," without human bias and, finally, devoid of subjective significance.

Composition teaching is still infused with attitudes from the time when science first reigned supreme, the value commonly attached to "exposition" arising from the long ascendancy of the logico-scientific turn of mind. Enthusiasm for publicly verifiable, abstract knowledge and debate is born of personal connection, of an ability to locate something of oneself in the world beyond the self--a bit of

commonplace wisdom long obscured by a rhetorical tradition which severed "objective," impersonal prose from its relation to personal experience, assigning exposition and narration separate labels and distinct, unequal slots in composition curricula.

TOWARD A RICHER DEFINITION OF NARRATIVE

While classical tradition bestowed preeminence on logical thought and the scientific revolution brought new prestige to empirically discerned fact, a different tradition sees storytelling as a vehicle for an equally rich, distinctly valuable sort of knowledge--indeed, the word "narrative" is derived from the Latin *gnarus*, denoting "knowing" or "expert" (see White, 1981, p. 1). Storytelling has always assumed an important role in the social, cognitive, and emotional landscapes of children and adults alike; as we grow toward maturity, our propensity for increasingly sophisticated forms of storytelling is fueled by a will to redeem bits of experience from the indistinguishable stream, to craft them into formal, meaningful wholes with beginnings, middles, and ends.

But a caution is in order: that the narrative may represent a distinct mode of thought (Bruner, 1984, 1986) does not immediately translate into a taxonomy of discourse. While great literature offers abundant examples of masterful narrative in its "pure" form, the storytelling urge also inspires and occasionally burns through an overtly expository text: "Inside every non-narrative kind of discourse there stalk the ghosts of narrative," observes Rosen (1984, p. 12), while, conversely, "Inside every narrative there stalk the ghosts of non-narrative discourse." But even as one holds in mind the dynamic interplay between narrative and the finest expository discourse, the tenacity of their separate labels denotes a belief in their distinct definitions; and if our definition of exposition has been impoverished by an exaggerated enthusiasm for decontextualized, depersonalized prose, so too has our vision of narration, which has habitually focused on texts failing to achieve the rich, satisfying character of the best that genre can achieve. Children write narratives, one is led to believe; college students, and those who hope to become college students, practice exposition.

Meanwhile, outside the confines of the composition class, scholars from varied academic disciplines are engaging in a spirited discussion regarding narrative, conceiving of it not only as a mode of discourse, but as an important and too-often undervalued mode of thought. While it may be impossible to synthesize a cohesive definition of narrative from their widely ranging speculations, a sampling of these discussions quickly reveals just how thin and narrow is the typical composition text's view of storied prose. Narrative, these scholars tell us, is more than an early device we later outgrow, more than personal anecdote which speaks only of the stranded "I." Here, for instance, is Peter Brooks (1984), a literary theorist, arguing narrative's important role alongside the more strictly "scientific" prose usually associated with the advent of empirical science:

> From sometime in the mid-eighteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century, Western societies appear to have felt an extraordinary need or desire for plots, whether in fiction, history, philosophy, or any of the social sciences, which in fact largely came into being with the Enlightenment and Romanticism. As Voltaire announced and then the Romantics confirmed, history replaces theology as the key discourse and central imagination in that historical explanation becomes nearly a necessary factor of any thought about human society: the question of what we are typically must pass through the question of where we are, which in turn is interpreted to mean, how did we get to be there? Not only history but historiography, the philosophy of history, philology, mythography, diachronic linguistics, anthropology, archaeology, and evolutionary biology all establish their claim as fields of inquiry, and all respond to the need for an explanatory narrative that seeks its authority in a return to origins and the tracing of a coherent story forward from origin to present. (pp. 5-6)

Such tracing demands that one find the important lines, selecting and arranging details from the available multitude to create a comprehensible, representative, satisfying account. Both Brooks (1984) and Bruner (1986) cite the Russian Formalists' distinction between "fabula" and "sjuzet"--that is, the timeless raw material of story versus plotted narrative discourse--to underscore the craft and discipline required to convert a banal series of events into a memorable and satisfying text. "Narratives," writes Ricouer (1981b), "have both a chronological and non-chronological dimension," the latter constituting the patterns and themes which meld scattered events into coherent wholes: overlooked by "anti-narrativist historians and structuralists," this "configurational dimension" translates simple chronology into a "thought" of sorts (pp. 174-175). Where raw chronology is metamorphosed into narrative discourse, the stream of events congealing, through a process of hermeneutic reconstruction, into distinct beginnings, middles, and ends (see also White, 1981), a richness of meaning emerges which is less dependent on the more scientific forms of rational analysis and empirical evidence than on interpretations of experience--affective, holistic, and, especially in mature narratives, reflective. Like all interpretations, narratives offer subjective views of reality--a fact which does not diminish their worth but certainly alters the evaluative frame. A different yardstick is needed: one doesn't ask of a narrative that it be "true" in the same sense as empirically verifiable fact, but, rather, that it offer a satisfying, complete, plausible version of events (Bruner, 1984, 1986; Robinson & Hawpe, 1986).

Bruner is quick to emphasize that while there is certainly nothing wrong with the mode of knowledge and discourse traditionally associated with scientific inquiry, our culture's problem lies in regarding it as the supreme achievement, all else perceived as a falling away into base subjectivity. This attitude highlights our culturally biased view of both thought and language, argues Bruner (1984, 1986),

our preference for what he calls, following Kuhn (1963), the "paradigmatic." Bruner holds that the narrative and the paradigmatic represent two major currents of human cognition; distinct but equally valuable, both contribute importantly to the rich variety of human thought. But our cognitive landscape, he notes, has been impoverished: for while our culture studies and nourishes the paradigmatic emphasis on rational analysis, empirical discovery, and formal verification, we continue to ignore or denigrate the narrative's contrasting emphasis on the contextualized, the value-infused, the idiosyncratic--in short, its focus on human meaning over "truth" in the rational-empirical sense (Bruner, 1984, 1986). "Perhaps Rorty is right," muses Bruner (1986, p. 12), "in characterizing the mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy . . . as preoccupied with the epistemological question of how to know the truth" as opposed to "the broader question of how we come to endow experience with meaning, which is the question that preoccupies the poet and the storyteller."

This process of endowing experience with meaning concerns not only the writer of narrative but the reader, who must enter the world of the story, grasp the intentions of its actors, ferret out its connecting threads, themes, and perspectives. Successful narrative discourse, argues Bruner (1986, pp. 25-26), assists the reader in this process by producing a "subjunctive" world through the use of language which enlists the reader's imagination. One variety of such language, he notes, is "presupposition," defined as "the creation of implicit rather than explicit meaning," thus allowing, in marked contrast to Olson's (1977) definition of "text," the free play of the reader's interpretive capacity. Secondly, narrative is said to employ the language of "subjectification," that is, "the depiction of reality not through an omniscient eye that views a timeless reality, but through the filter of the consciousness of protagonists in the story." Further, stories involve "multiple perspectives," a view of the world through "a set of prisms," each of which catches some particular aspect or version of events. Such subjunctive language is especially necessary to story comprehension because, argues Bruner, "the narrative mode leads to conclusions not about certainties in an aboriginal world, but about the varying perspectives that can be constructed to make experience comprehensible" (p. 37). The writer of effective narrative may thus fall far short of Olson's explicit, decontextualized ideal, but compensates by achieving a particular kind of reader engagement--not a pursuit of the objectified "truth" in an account but, rather, the process of sifting through alternate interpretations and ultimately crafting one's own.

While Bruner (1986) finds in the literary story a pristine lens through which to view the nature of narrative and observe its merits, the broad outlines of his argument are echoed in discussions of narrative across diverse fields. Among historiographers, for instance, the opposition of narrative and scientific modes of knowledge figures importantly in a still-prevalent debate regarding the ideal nature of historical writing. Those advocating a narrative approach have taken issue with the claim (see Hempel, 1962) that history can be written in accordance with a scientific model said to illuminate how events follow deductively from causal principles. Gallie (1968), for instance, argues that the best historical writing

assumes a narrative pattern, offering a plausible, carefully supported interpretation of the sweep of events and highlighting human intention as the prime shaping force (see also Hexter, 1971; Phillips, 1983; Stone, 1979). Although others argue that historiography can retain a scientific character while also illuminating teleologic patterns (see, for instance, Danto, 1965; VonWright, 1971), many would assert that attempts to impart an understanding of how human intention contributes to causality requires a narrative component--the narrative dealing by definition, according to Bruner (1986), with the "vicissitudes of human intentions" (p. 16). Failing to adequately analyze teleological patterns and their particular role in causality, the historian's rendering fails as human story; and according to narrative advocate Hayden White (1981, p. 6), no matter how careful a historian may be in weighing evidence and verifying facts, "his account remains something less than a proper history when he has failed to give to reality the form of a story"--the historical narrative, at its artful best, holding much in common with those of literary tradition (White, 1973, 1978). The patterns of causality illuminated by a narrative history, weaving the strands of human events into a cohesive, convincing interpretation, are of a different sort than those envisioned by the purely "scientific" historiographer: for the narrative historian doesn't simply "find" an objective truth which is wholly "out there," but produces a skillfully integrated version of the facts, one which is admittedly filtered through an individual's interpretive lens.

A strikingly similar debate has recently arisen among clinical psychologists, with an emerging school of narrativists criticizing Freud's view of analysis as a "positivist natural science" (Schafer, 1981, p. 25), envisioning it instead as an interpretive, story-crafting discipline (see also Klein, 1976; Sarbin, 1986). Analysis, argues Schafer, deals in human stories on two levels. First, the methods and interpretive structures of psychoanalysis are said to comprise a generalized view of the story of human development--its typified beginning, course, and end. On an individual level, analysands' life stories are seen as the primary focus of therapeutic interpretation, with opportunities for beneficial change arising as individuals describe and come to understand the narratives which comprise their particular lives (see also Hunt & Hunt, 1977, on the role of story-reconstruction in the emotional survival of divorcing couples; and Progoff, 1977, and Rainer, 1978, on the therapeutic value of narrative journals). The goal of psychoanalysis is thereby re-formulated as "not so much archaeologically to reconstruct a life" as to "help the patient construct a more contradiction-free and generative narrative of it" (Bruner, 1986, p. 9). Trading objectified analysis for a direct, emotive interpretation of the particular psyche, narrative psychologists represent another departure away from the hard-science model, toward a kind of knowing grounded in--indeed, located in--the human story.

Whether in the context of scholarly or student writing, the difference between an expository, quasi-scientific pattern of thesis and support and a narrative comes down to a difference in modes of inquiry: whether to opt for an approach which cuts across the temporal chronology to explicitly explore some over-arching principle, or whether to follow the plotted sequence, building meaning through the

process of selecting, patterning and interpreting. Packer (1985), contrasting interpretive ("hermeneutic") inquiry with the more traditional modes of rationalism and empiricism, charts some distinctions which usefully inform a consideration of their corresponding modes of discourse. While the rationalist characterizes how a given process follows deductively from larger principles and the empiricist searches for covering laws to account for patterns and regularities, notes Packer, the hermeneutic narrative offers a plausible description of everyday occurrences, altogether avoiding the push toward generalizable laws. Its usefulness, he stresses, is not thereby diminished: "The difference between a rationalist or empiricist explanation and a hermeneutic interpretation," he argues, "is a little like the difference between a map of a city and an account of that city by someone who lives in it and walks its streets" (p. 1091). While one interpretive account may vary widely from another, stressing as each must the "system of possibilities and resources, frustrations and obstacles" which are grasped individually and perhaps idiosyncratically, therein lies their value: for one interested in more than the city's juxtaposition of physical objects" (p. 1092) an interpretive narrative offers a more personal and prejudiced, but uniquely valuable rendering. Maps are indeed useful--as are larger principles and covering laws--but so too, in a quite different way, is a grasp of the richly tangled strands of human meaning as they emerge and are in turn examined through story.

Both scientific and narrative thinking deal in causality: the former working--like Olson's decontextualized, explicit text--toward objectified, abstract, context-free principles, the latter toward flexible, concrete, context-bound interpretations marked by the feelings, goals, and values of their creators (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986). And both are, of course, valuable. The problem is that in our culture the narrative is still so commonly overlooked that we can scarcely define how to separate the superb from the trivial, the richly meaningful from the narrow or trite. Indeed, few of us could articulate precisely what distinguishes the mature narratives of historians, psychologists or interpretive social scientists from those student narratives which strike us as unsatisfying--for while our culture has studied and nourished the paradigmatic way of knowing, argues Bruner (1986, p. 14), "we know precious little in any formal sense about how to make good stories." And thus teachers engage in arguments with students in the absence of clear ground rules. What are students to think? Why, indeed, are the narratives of great writers included in the literary canon while students' narratives are dismissed as "mere anecdotes," "just stories"? Despite the ubiquity of such wholesale attacks on student narratives, perhaps what really bothers those who level them lies not so much in genre as in matters of quality which, given our long neglect of things narrative, elude our grasp.

RESEARCH ON NARRATIVE: THE ISSUE OF DEVELOPMENT

While research on the narrative has been in many ways both rich and far-reaching, what it has often failed to examine is more pertinent to this inquiry. As

Rosen (1984) points out, leading narratologists (e.g., Barthes, 1974; Chatman 1978; Genette, 1980; Todorov, 1977) have looked in depth at the superb stories of literature, largely ignoring the everyday narratives of ordinary people and the attendant pedagogic issue of how narrative competence arises and is best nurtured. On the other hand, the extensive studies of narrative conducted by educational researchers have most often examined various aspects of children's comprehension and production of stories, largely ignoring the continued growth of narrative competence in older students and sidestepping the question of how such growth interacts with the development of expository competence.

Further complicating discussions of narrative growth is the issue of "real" versus imagined storyworlds--the ability to produce the wholly fictional narrative versus the factual account of historical or personal events. In a study of children's imaginative discourse, Dyson (1988b) discusses from a developmental perspective the complex negotiation between fact and fancy young writers must master; while moving toward an understanding of how their immediate worlds can inform otherwise fictional stories, the children Dyson studies also become more skilled in distinguishing the factual from the imagined. Although this negotiation must be acknowledged as an important developmental step in younger learners, my interest here is primarily in the personal experience narratives of older students, who may be assumed to have grasped the difference between the fictional stories normally relegated to "creative writing" classes and the factual ones which generally find their way into otherwise "expository" syllabi. I will draw upon empirical and theoretic literature which examines both factual and imaginative stories, agreeing with Ricouer's (1981b) view of their underlying contiguity--both sharing a common structure as well as attesting to the "historical condition of man" (p. 289).

Much of the work on children's acquisition of narrative competence has focused on the nature and attainment of "story grammars"--that is, discourse schemata containing the prototypical elements which are said to be universally present in stories (see, for instance, Bower, 1976; Glenn, 1978; Johnson & Mandler, 1980; Mancuso, 1986; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Rumelhart, 1975, 1977; Stein, 1979; Stein & Glenn, 1979; Thorndyke, 1977). This notion of internalized discourse schemata underlying basic narratives has received additional support from cognitive psychology (e.g., Kintsch, 1977a, 1977b; Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; van Dijk, 1977). On the other hand, story grammars have been criticized on the grounds that, by looking at narratives in narrowed experimental contexts, they place an exaggerated focus on what is remembered of a given story, ignoring the often more important, context-based question of why it is remembered (Rosen, 1984); as with the traditional modal systems discussed earlier, story grammars can be seen as an attempt to diagnose from textual features alone both the writer's intention and the typical reader's response (see Bruner, 1986). Besides their failure "to address alternate purposes for reading and writing," note Tierney and Mosenthal (1980, pp. 82-83), story grammars also "confine their consideration of story features to a single protagonist" which does not require explicit instructional emphasis. In related work, narrative "event chain formulations" (e.g., Trabasso & Nicholas, 1981;

Warren, Nicholas & Trabasso, 1979), which do allow for multiple protagonists, offer a means of analyzing the logical patterns underlying stories; they, too, however, are said to be limited by a constricted view of writer and reader purpose (see Tierney & Mosenthal, 1980).

As Stein and Policastro (1985) have pointed out, much of the story grammar and narrative chaining literature has shared the assumption that stories are told primarily for entertainment, thus offering a greatly constricted vision of their in fact varied functions. In their review of story anthologies from a range of cultures, Stein and Policastro found that while almost all contained at least a few purely entertaining stories, in most this was not the predominant group: "The range of purposes for telling a story," they stress, "is as varied as the motives that underlie human behavior" (p. 115). Such functions, they note, include the reorganization of personal experience (Applebee, 1978; Goffman, 1974; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Quasthoff & Nikolaus, 1981; Sutton-Smith, 1976), the preservation of events central to the evolution of a given society (Baker & Greene, 1977), and instruction (National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling, 1980).

A point implied but not directly discussed by Stein and Policastro is the role of narrative in support of an overarching expository aim, an issue largely unexplored in work on narrative and expository competence alike. Researchers such as Meyer (1975, 1977, 1985), Taylor (1980, 1982, 1983), Taylor and Beach (1984) and Anderson and Armbruster (1984) have proposed cognitive schemes which comprise the expository counterparts of story grammars; the most considerate expository texts, it is suggested, are those whose clearly hierarchical arrangement allows for ease of outlining. Just as the varied purposes of narrative are commonly ignored, so issues of engagement, persuasiveness and reader interest are often overlooked in such studies of expository competence. Thus, the purpose of both stories and exposition has been narrowly conceived: the perceived goal of the former to entertain, that of the latter to inform--in a linear, unadorned fashion, with the focus strictly on facts or theoretic abstractions.

While the notion that distinct cognitive schemes underlie various discourse modes is a definite improvement over more traditional measures of readability (see Davison, 1984, for a critical analysis of readability formulas), it is curious that no scheme has been proposed which fully accounts for texts in which narrative and exposition intertwine. Brewer (1980), in proposing a taxonomy of discourse which names exposition and narration as separate modes, reflects the general tendency: never mind that both may occur within a given piece, he argues, since, while "actual discourse" is admittedly "quite complex," "for purposes of analysis and experimentation, it is easy to find or write segments of discourse that are homogeneous" (p. 227). When discourse is thus viewed from a paradigmatic perspective which focuses on meticulous analysis of parts, the nature of the whole--which, as narrativists will argue (e.g., Applebee, 1978; Turner, 1981) is inevitably larger than the sum of its parts--is underestimated.

It is not difficult to grasp how a narrative component in an otherwise expository text might promote more spirited composing and interactive comprehension, bringing the larger issues under discussion into one's personal purview by encouraging the reader or writer to weigh her own values, beliefs, and background knowledge against the more public, depersonalized information under consideration--to assume new perspectives, and in so doing, enlarge one's own. Tierney and Pearson (1983) cite Hay and Brewer's (1982) and Applebee's (1978) research which suggests that "facility with alignment"--that is, the ability to take a story character's point of view--"develops with comprehension maturity." Adopting such an alignment, Tierney and Pearson hypothesize, "is akin to achieving a foothold from which meaning can be more readily negotiated, "allowing readers or writers to "take a stance on a topic and immerse themselves in the ideas or story," and to "acquire a sense of the whole as well as the parts" (p. 573). Though Tierney and Pearson do not directly suggest it, a narrative component in a primarily expository text can certainly be one path toward such a goal: why not include more stories in textbooks, for instance, to help readers visualize, take various perspectives, and activate background knowledge? Such an approach would foster not only straight acquisition of new information, but engagement and an effort to integrate such information into a system of personal meaning--emphasizing not just the business of "getting it right," but that of making connections.

While the study of literature suggests an emphasis on interpretation, appreciation, and personal touchstones, work on reading comprehension has tended to emphasize skills--primitive narrative skills on the one hand, later giving way to presumably more "advanced" expository skills. Less emphasis has been placed upon how appreciation and production of simple stories evolves toward narrative maturity, nor how this growth coincides and interacts with the development of expository competence--thus the impression that narrative is somehow easier to master while exposition, perceived as an intrinsically depersonalized genre, is more sophisticated. Narrative and exposition may grow to be separate modes of thought and language (Bruner, 1984, 1986) which reflect correspondingly distinct modes of cognitive processing (Olson, Mack & Duffy, 1981) and evaluation (Crowhurst, 1980), but this needn't obscure their common genesis and enduring status as parts of an interrelated cognitive whole. Indeed, many of the hallmarks of narrative growth--an increasing sensitivity to audience, for example, or the ability to step back and reflect upon events rather than simply re-telling them (see Applebee, 1978; Beach, 1987; Kernan, 1977; Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967)--have important implications for the development of expository competence as well.

Further obscuring the relationship between narrative and exposition is the commonly held assumption that in developmental terms narrative competence emerges first and therefore must be more elementary: "Children must represent in one mode of discourse--the narrative level of abstraction--several kinds of conception that in the adult world would be variously represented at several levels of abstraction," argues Moffett (1968, p. 50). But how accurate is this bit of

conjecturing which assigns narrative a central early role, then later demotes it to the lowliest slot on the cognitive hierarchy?

Langer (1985) has documented third-graders' abilities to distinguish between and produce both explanatory and narrative prose, a finding which would seem at first glance to contradict evidence elsewhere (e.g., Hidi & Hildyard, 1983) that exposition emerges later and more slowly. Langer does, however, allow that younger students exhibit a comparatively weak grasp of the organizational norms of reports as opposed to narrative, a gap which narrows considerably, she finds, "sometime between grades 6 and 9" (p. 185). In speculating as to why this development occurs relatively late, Langer sidesteps the tendency to label narrative a comprehensively "easier" genre, pointing instead to the issue of function. That is, while "children hear stories that use the same forms as the stories that they are later expected to read and write in school," they "rarely hear spoken versions of academic reports" and thus lack early models for the production of expository text (Britton, 1987, offers similar speculations). Langer thus underscores the fact that discourse production arises not simply from cognitive growth, but from a developing grasp of the real-world functions towards which language can be employed (see also Labov & Waletzky, 1967).

While facility with basic narrative may or may not emerge earlier, certainly the rather dramatic growth in expository competence among older students should not be construed as an indication that narrative growth therefore simultaneously ceases. From Plato to Piaget, Western culture has assigned particular importance to ascending the ladder of abstraction (Hayakawa, 1941); but there are, of course, other kinds of sophistication--in imaginative worlds, certainly, and also in the personal experience narrative, a discourse form which has been shown to mature along with the individual storyteller (Applebee, 1978; Dixon & Stratta, 1986; Kernan, 1977; Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967).

Applebee (1978), drawing upon Piaget's model of cognitive development, sketches a theoretic model to account for the growth of narrative ability--growth which, he argues, extends into adolescence and beyond. Like all cognitive development, argues Applebee, linguistic growth proceeds through Piaget's dual processes of assimilation and accommodation: as new experiences are recognized as fitting a familiar pattern, they are assimilated into existing cognitive representations--structures which can in turn be enlarged or altered to accommodate unfamiliar, novel features. Thus, early representations serve as a basis for all that is to follow; rather than simply dying out, they are subsumed into an ever-widening circle of new adaptations, deepening understanding, and increased complexity.

Thus, that which teachers often label as unsatisfactory in student narratives--predictable story lines, a certain narrow self-absorption, the inability to think in other ways where straight chronology is not the most effective choice--can be seen as indications of narrative immaturity, not a wholesale indictment of the genre. Such shortcomings could perhaps be better grasped as clues toward appropriate

instruction in narrative, ways in rather than justifications for closing the door. From a developmental perspective, current performance suggests appropriate strategies for promoting future growth. Through careful consideration of that which strikes them as unsatisfactory in students' stories, teachers can develop a more focused agenda for facilitating both continued narrative growth and the flexibility to choose a different approach where appropriate.

Such an agenda demands, of course, that writing teachers overturn the still-prevalent conviction that expository competence is somehow the lone index of cognitive growth. There is indeed evidence for a counter-claim: Applebee (1978), for instance, demonstrates that the process of "decentering" which Piaget envisioned as the locus of intellectual growth is reflected not only in the development of expository competence, as is commonly assumed, but in continued narrative growth as well. Citing Bullough's (1912) concept of "psychical distancing," Applebee presents data demonstrating that as very young children begin to mature, they become increasingly able to produce stories which explore issues and behaviors removed from their immediate worlds. Children's responses to others' stories reflect a similar trend, notes Applebee, indicating a growing ability to analyze, classify, and, later still, interpret and reflect upon written stories. More recently, Dixon and Stratta (1986) have discussed how students' narratives reflect their expanding social horizons--not a movement away from the self, but a growth toward engagement with an ever-widening range of people, issues, and concerns. Thus, the growing ability to write and speak in a way that will bear fruit for public audiences involves not a wholesale movement away from stories but, rather, a movement away from an exclusively egocentric approach to their comprehension and creation.

Nor does such "decentering" necessitate writing which is increasingly disembedded, depersonalized, and decontextualized. In a recent study of young children's emerging narrative competence, Dyson (1988a) finds that, in direct opposition to Olson's (1977) view of text, beginning writers must find ways to embed their writing in social contexts, forming a "complex dialectic" between "graphic activity and their interactions with each other" (p. 3). While "we sometimes describe learning to write as learning to create worlds of words that exist on their own, disembedded from sensible human contexts," notes Dyson, writing in fact "takes root and develops as it becomes embedded in children's lives--as it becomes a way of understanding their own experiences and of interacting with others" (p. 24). In contrast to the more common emphasis on nudging developing writers toward disembedded texts, Dyson expresses concern about those children who fail to make connections between "the world of the text and their own worlds" (p. 25). It is indeed a perennial issue: as older writers struggle to establish a foothold in academic material which seems at first depersonalized and abstract, a similar dialectic takes place, the best expository writing always bearing the creator's fingerprints, the effort to bring that which is outside into one's own context. An effective expository text inevitably contains a narrative component,

one's experiential base conveying commitment and fostering engagement even where it remains a tacit underpinning.

The ability to use personal anecdote to promote primarily expository ends may be one indication of linguistic maturity, but it should not be regarded as the sole dimension against which to measure continued narrative growth. Britton et al. (1975) argue that narrative can occur anywhere along their empirically based continuum from transactional to expressive to poetic--allowing, like Moffett (1968), that more generalized, transactional narratives tend to appear as students mature, but also noting the emergence of more sophisticated efforts in the poetic mode. Applebee's (1978) primary focus on poetic-mode narratives--which, he argues, serve an assimilative function, re-ordering and reflecting upon experience rather than seeking to inform transactionally--further underscores this point. Development does not involve a one-dimensional movement toward more public, transactional prose, notes Applebee: rather, the entire continuum matures, including the expressive function which gives rise to the other two. In a complementary perspective, Brewer (1980, p. 224) names four discourse "forces" (following Searle's "sentence force," 1969), any one (or more) of which may be present in a given narrative: to "inform," "persuade," "entertain," and (lacking an appropriate infinitive) "literary-aesthetic." More research is needed, argues Brewer, to determine whether some forces are acquired sooner than others--research which could account for the earlier emergence of the entertainment function, and perhaps shed further light on the growth toward poetic ("literary-aesthetic") as well as more transactional (informative and persuasive) narratives. In the meantime, it certainly makes sense to dismiss the common assumption that the older child's emerging ability to write transactional stories containing an abstract point can be construed as the single index of continued narrative growth.

As appreciative readers of great literature know, narratives need not contain a single, easily summarized "point" in order to be considered richly meaningful. In examining how formal operational thought alters adolescents' responses to literary narratives, Applebee (1978) notes not only more close attention to text-based concerns such as structure and multiple levels of meaning, but also a shift "away from the story itself toward the 'chances of life' it is discussing" (p. 119) and the new understanding the text has engendered in the reader. Increasingly, stories are grasped as interpretations, points of view to be disputed, accepted, or rejected. As adolescents learn to read for theme as well as plot (see also Hunt & Vipond, 1985), to move from simple re-telling "toward interpretation" (Applebee, 1978, p. 119), they gradually master a complex negotiation between the culturally owned pool of meanings and experiences contained in all great literature. As the cognitive and social self is enlarged, so too is the ability to comprehend the recursive, multi-layered complexity of literary narratives, to appreciate their at once personal and collective significance.

Beach's (1987) study comparing narrative essays written by seventh graders, college freshmen, and secondary and college English teachers suggests that a

parallel claim could be made for the ability to produce written stories. Asked to "select one event, infer past and current feelings about the event, recall sensory details, recall other people, define goals, organize information, assess, and revise drafts" (p. 60), the three groups displayed a marked difference in their abilities to sustain concrete and reflective stories. While the younger writers tended toward simple re-telling, the mature writers, notes Beach (p. 56), could "create a tension between their past and present perspectives," "representing differences in beliefs, self-concept, and levels of cognitive and social development," re-envisioning the event as a theme-driven whole in which the self is both actor and observed.

Ultimately, then, it is along complexly tangled, multi-faceted dimensions that narrative growth must be assessed. That such development can proceed along various lines depending upon differences of personality, learning style, or ethnicity further complicates the issue for researchers, but perhaps suggests something of more immediate usefulness to practitioners. As we appreciate the narrative as a way of learning more about students' subjective worlds, we can come to see in it an opportunity to meet them on their home turf, to build a school environment in which differing worlds can productively meet. The fact that students from various cultures bring to school distinctive ideas of what constitutes effective narrative (e.g., Au, 1980; Au & Mason, 1981; Au & Kawakami, 1985; Cazden, Michaels, & Tabor, 1985; Heath, 1982, 1983; Labov, 1972; Michaels, 1981, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1984; Smitherman, 1977; Tannen, 1980; Watson-Gegeo & Boggs, 1977) may complicate efforts at sensitive lesson-planning, but it also reminds one of the need to first accommodate the student's individual vision before attempting to enlarge it, a dual goal which runs through all the best educational efforts (see Au & Mason, 1981 and Au & Kawakami, 1985 on the KEEP program's successful efforts to accommodate Hawaiian children's narrative styles in the classroom). More research is needed to reveal how cognitive development is mirrored in students' narratives, but such insight is incomplete without an attendant understanding of how social development--the growing sense of self, and of one's self in the world at large--is inextricably intertwined with both thought and language.

EXPOSITION "VERSUS" NARRATION: TOWARD A DIALECTIC

The pedagogic issue of whether to emphasize exposition or narration is something like a segment of a hologram: the part, that is, containing the image of the whole--the whole complex negotiation between self and society which characterizes all of socio-cognitive growth. And all of communicative growth: for "language," writes Bakhtin (1981, p. 293), "lies on the borderline between oneself and the other"--"it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions," and "it is from there one must take the word, and make it one's own." In the end, one's own voice--indeed, one's intellectual self--is a dynamic blend of the personal and public.

Ricouer's (1981a) model of text analysis--"text" being flexibly defined as a written document, a culture, a psyche, or any other phenomena worthy of interpretation--further illuminates the partly public, partly personal process through which understanding evolves. In comprehending a text, argues Ricouer, one must both "distanciate," stepping back to grasp a more general significance, and also "appropriate," that is, bring this significance into one's own purview. With too much distanciation, engagement and personal meaning are lost; with too much appropriation, egocentrism distorts perception. With a balance between the two, the understanding self is enlarged, as is its capacity to "take in" what is "out there," to resonate with a comprehension which is at once personal and larger than the individual person.

The question is plain: given that one grasps the narrative mode's intellectual respectability, why not both allow opportunities for pure narrative and encourage transactional, expository prose infused with narrative meaning? Certainly some influential theorists have recommended just that. Elbow (1981), for instance, advocates "breathing experience" into expository prose, while Moffett (1981b, p. 130) encourages the fostering of student writing which, like the finest works of our literary tradition, fuse "personal experience, private vision, and downright eccentricity with intellectual vigor and verbal objectification." A narrative component, whether overt or tacit, can do more than ornament an otherwise expository theme: as the world of ideas is mixed with the students' own lives and the stories they tell, the objective is brought into the world of personal meaning. Egocentricity is overcome, but not at the cost of subjective involvement.

Why, then, the continued preponderance of syllabi and texts which, after perhaps a single "personal" essay, move on to a diet of pure exposition? Narration is still commonly seen as not only wholly distinct from exposition, but quite subordinate to it, our culture's preference for the paradigmatic reflected everywhere that exposition is seen as singularly demanding "relatively organized, conceptually integrated knowledge" (Flower & Hayes, 1980, p. 34). Heath's (1983) study of culturally divergent learners in the Piedmont Carolinas illustrates the tension: while recognizing that their students' stories offer a means of crafting a learning environment sensitive to ethnic difference, these teachers soon look for ways to move "beyond" the "discursive, redundant, and sometimes entertaining but often irrelevant stories" of individuals, to more general questions of "'Why?' 'What does that mean?'" (p. 326). That this particular bit of nudging toward the expository occurs in the context of a science lesson--the students had grown their own tomatoes, and were then asked to relate something about the experience--reflects again exposition's usefulness in conveying a type of knowledge, and the tendency for teachers to give the impression that it is therefore a superior mode in some more general sense. Exposition may indeed be a more appropriate means of conveying things scientific, things abstract, things logical; but is doesn't serve for all, and it doesn't negate the value of personal experience--which in student writing generally finds expression as narrative. Indeed, that mature writing may be purely narrative, purely expository, or a combination of the two is convincingly illustrated

by Heath's own extended stories about these teachers and students, her essentially narrative, ethnographic account punctuated only occasionally by expository distancing.

As Goodman (1981) points out, narration and exposition really exist as poles of a continuum upon which any given text is subject to shape-shifting: with enough pulling and tugging, he notes, narrative is nullified altogether, as categories relevant to a given purpose cut across the temporal sequence and scramble the story in the interests of illuminating some abstracted point. But this is not to say that "pure" narrative is inherently inferior; this is only so if students must over-rely on it, having failed to master a wider range of discourse schemata. Thus, while academic writing may indeed demand that writers go beyond the "blow-by-blow" account of their own thought processes which Flower (1979) criticizes, a synthesis of publicly owned knowledge need not--indeed cannot--leave out the dimension of personal significance. It is a point too often overlooked in Western education--which, as Rogoff (1981) has documented, promotes a kind of thinking which can be traced back to the Greeks (Havelock, 1976), a cognitive style favoring the development of formal logic, science, and technology.

Nor is the traditional denigration of student narratives limited to cognitive concerns alone: given the social and political realities of school, it has been suggested (Hymes & Cazden, 1979; Rosen, 1984) that the anti-narrative bias can also be traced to issues of classroom power. Rosen (1984) suspects that narrative discourse and its corresponding way of knowing may be devalued largely because they are of such common currency: while everyone comes to the classroom with a gaggle of stories to tell, narrative is discouraged among the masses, leaving only one "chief and privileged story-teller"--the teacher (p. 18). Hymes (1979) argues that, given narrative's status as a perfectly acceptable mode of pursuing and expressing knowledge among co-members of a group, this suppression of students' story-telling must be seen as an indication of their lesser status within the school community. The traditional dichotomy of technical/formal versus narrative language thus finds its roots in social stratification rather than solid evidence from cognitive psychology, Hymes concludes. "The right to unite position and personal experience in public" becomes in school "a badge of status and rank" (p. 136)--an honor denied students, whose outside cultures are kept outside, forcing them to learn concurrently both "new subject matter" and, in many cases, "a new mode of learning" (p. 132).

To some extent, then, the hegemony of exposition can be seen as reflective of a teacher-centered power base; conversely, some theorists advocating more personal narrative in the classroom (e.g., Elbow, 1973, 1981; Macrorie, 1970; Moffett, 1968, 1981a, 1981b) also favor a generally more student-centered approach featuring such innovations as, for instance, student-led response groups. While not always are the two camps so neatly defined--one leading proponent of collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1978, 1984) supports a largely expository agenda--one senses on the one hand a willingness to boldly hand over power to students, on the other a

concern that such generosity may only trap them in egocentric mediocrity. Drawn to worry along with E.D. Hirsch (1987) and others (e.g., Bloom, 1987; Cheney, 1987) that our students' grasp of the culture at large has grown woefully impoverished, the latter group of instructors hold profound doubts about the depth of students' personal narratives. Connors (1987, p. 179) summarizes the concern of some that "within a culture whose educational institutions give most of their clients only a shallow knowledge across a broad range of fields," the old dictum "write what you know" can only be translated into personal writing which focuses on the narrow and mundane.

Such debates over public knowledge versus private meaning contain important issues, but often seem as vaguely focused as, indeed, our definitions of the narrative and expository modes. Instead of reductive discussion of which to emphasize, we need a deeper understanding of how each can support and enlarge the other. For that to happen, the narrative end of the continuum must be given its due, and that constitutes a tough proposal in a culture which continues to value as higher truth things verifiable, quantifiable, generalizable. Still influenced by a classical rhetoric which downplays the personal (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1984; Connors, 1987), we tend to forget that external reality becomes infused with meaning as we locate something of ourselves in it, the self in turn becoming enlarged through this process of making the world outside its own. It is a point missed by those cultural literacy advocates who assume a passing knowledge of canonical facts and works will launch neophytes on the road to cultural enlightenment. Culture is a collection of people, and one is inducted not through being force-fed its important documents, but through a continual process of moving outward to sample the world at large, then inward to discover what it all means to the learning self.

Ideally, student writing should reflect such a dialectic. Essays are, as in Montaigne's first use of the word, "trials"--a way of testing one's responses to subjects and situations, of negotiating between the subjective and objective. Some topics necessarily suggest a more impersonal, expository approach, others a more personal, narrative one; but regardless of the ratio, all discourse--indeed, all cognition--performs to some extent both functions. The best teaching begins, as anyone who has read Vygotsky or Freire or relied on intuition realizes, with meeting students on their own turf, finding there the seeds of future growth. In partnership with individuals--not faceless neophytes--one can chart strategies for moving forward together, for facilitating the broadening sweep.

In terms of discourse, the narrative--whether embedded in an overtly "expository" text or presented in pure form--represents such a personal turf, such an instructive starting point. But it is more than that, too: "So natural is the impulse to narrate," writes Hayden White (1981, p.1), "so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent--absent or, as in some domains of contemporary Western intellectual and artistic culture, program-

matically refused." Some of the most important and most universal human experiences--witnessing birth or death, falling in love, encountering the mysterious, the unknowable--are contained in personal stories, stories translated into exposition only at a great cost. To deny such narrative knowing is to rob students of personal meaning; to fail to help them grasp its place in the larger human experience is ultimately to trivialize both. What is needed is not only a deeper appreciation of the poles of the continuum, but an understanding of the dialectic they together can form--how it informs the whole of cognition, and how it can inform the teaching of writing.

Note

1. In spirit, Bain's view of scientific discourse matches that of the British essayists writing in the tradition of John Locke and others; viewed critically in terms of its own scientific credibility, however, Bain's theoretic grounding for the modes fails to stand up before modern scrutiny. That his attempt to match the modes of discourse with corresponding modes of thought is based on a faulty, incomplete model of the mind has been convincingly pointed out by a number of modern rhetoricians (Connors, 1981; Crowley, 1984; D'Angelo, 1984; Harned, 1985; Woods, 1985), many of them citing a central irony: while Bain's modes were readily accepted in the nineteenth century largely because of their conceptual grounding in a then-respected cognitive theory, they continued to dominate practice, imbued with an aura of authority most couldn't quite explain, long after associationist psychology had been discredited and forgotten.

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Author's Note

Special thanks to Sarah Warshauer Freedman for her careful and extensive feedback on an earlier draft of this paper. Thanks also to Anne Haas Dyson, James Kormier, and James Jarrett for their helpful suggestions. The author assumes full responsibility for any misunderstanding of this response.

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